



"C" COMPANY, 2/48TH BATTALION RAID ON CARRIER HILL, TOBRUK, 22 APRIL 1941 by Ivor Hele 54" x 108"

A SELECTION OF

AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL PAINTINGS

WITH THE STORY OF THE ARTISTS



COMPANY AWAITING RELIEF NEAR VILLE-SUR-ANCRE, JUNE 1918
by Will Dyson 22½" x 18½"

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AUSTRALIAN ARTISTS AT WAR

by RONALD MONSON

THE many thousands of historical pictures by Australian war artists housed in the Australian War Memorial in Canberra have been justly acclaimed as unique among such national collections. Nowhere else in the world has there been gathered such a representative display of all the varied activities of a nation's fighting men, engaged in stirring action or going about their daily routines, depicted by a large and brilliant band of artists. Apart from the works of artists who had achieved fame before they turned their skills to war subjects or who became famous later, there are sketches and paintings in the Memorial by some 200 members of the Australian forces with no world-wide reputations whose on-the-spot studies have nevertheless enriched the collection.

The works are mainly devoted to the two world upheavals of 1914-18 and 1939-45, but there are also pictures of Australians in action on land, sea and in the air in Korea and Vietnam, in addition to a single Boer War portrait — of Frank Wilkinson, the war correspondent — and a couple of illustrations covering the movements of the Sudan contingent.

Like the conception of the idea for an Australian War Memorial, the decision to recruit Australian artists to portray the activities of their fellow countrymen in battle originated on Gallipoli Peninsula in 1915 in the fertile brain of C. E. W. Bean, the official Australian war correspondent and prospective historian of *Australia in The War of 1914-18*. Bean, himself an artist of some ability, had decided to bring out *The Anzac Book*, filled with lively articles, black and white cartoons and illustrations in colour. As the material was to be supplied by the troops, for the troops, the emphasis was to be on the richly humorous side. Among the soldier artists Bean rounded up to illustrate the book were F. R. Crozier, then a private in the 22nd Battalion, Privates C. Leyshon-White, David Barker, Ted Colles and Trooper W. O. Hewett. These five were temporarily relieved of their military duties to complete the art work on the book.

Although the literary contributions were from Australians, New Zealanders and British troops on Anzac, the illustrations were done almost entirely by Australians. They worked with what materials were to hand. They used red and blue pencils and other colours were laid on with iodine brushes. The Anzac book was to have been ready for distribution to the troops by Christmas 1915, but plans had to be changed when the peninsula was evacuated in December and by the time it had been produced in April 1916 — by Cassell and Co., in London — Australian troops had begun arriving in France.

The artists who had illustrated the Anzac Book had dispersed, but Dr. Bean, with the idea of a national collection of A.I.F. war paintings growing, but not yet crystallized, in his mind, persuaded Brigadier-General John Gellibrand, the commander of the 6th Infantry Brigade, to give Private Frank Crozier a chance to sketch various phases of the A.I.F. in action, with the idea that he would be able to translate his experiences to canvas later. Gellibrand in July 1916 made Crozier a runner, delivering messages between brigade headquarters in Sausage Gully and the front line. As a result Crozier passed through the merciless bombardments of the bitter Pozieres and Moquet Farm fighting. He was the only one of the Australian war artists who had first-hand experience of that fighting, which he later depicted so graphically. But at that stage he was a serving soldier and not an officially appointed artist.

Dr. Bean's original suggestion, made after the Pozieres fighting of July-September 1916, was that some of the Anzac Book artists still with the A.I.F. should paint their recollections of Anzac and Pozieres. On the suggestion of E. A. Box and H. C. Smart of the Australian High Commissioner's Office in London that this scheme should be enlarged by the appointment of Australian artists outside the A.I.F., who could be given temporary commissions and sent to war theatres, the cartoonist Will Dyson was appointed a war artist in December 1916 with the rank of lieutenant. Dyson, who lived with the front-line troops for the remainder of the war and was twice wounded, was described by the English art critic G. K. Chesterton as "the greatest cartoonist and probably the greatest artist of the English world". Dr. Bean said that his drawings of the winter campaigns of 1916-18, "made from the inside" were "quite unparalleled, at least in British art".

Thus Dyson became the first artist appointed outside the ranks of the A.I.F. In February 1917 he was joined by Daryl Lindsay, his brother-in-law, who had been serving with an A.I.F. transport company and who, according to Dr. Bean, got himself transferred to assist Dyson "in order to keep his sister's husband from harm and incidentally to get an occasional chance of using his own paint-box".

To drop him into an acceptable military slot Lindsay was made Lieutenant Dyson's batman. This led to some hilarious situations. Dr. Bean has described a typical start of a working day for the pair: "As they were starting off, loaded with drawing board, sketchbooks, rations, blankets, and other equipment for a week up the line, Daryl would protest that some blank thing was or was not included. 'Now, my good man, no mutiny!' Dyson would exclaim, striking the pose of an officer of the guards. 'Remember whom you're speaking to! I won't tolerate insubordination!' And off the two mates would trudge with their paraphernalia into the mud of the shelled area."

In May 1917 Captain J. L. Treloar moved from France to London to establish the Australian War Records Section, which was at first charged with the task of collecting, preserving and indexing the official military records — war diaries, maps and air photos and correspondence files — of the A.I.F. The collection of other records, including sketches and pictures and trophies was to be the responsibility of the High Commissioner's office in London. But at the beginning of September that year the collection of war trophies, photographs, other than those taken for military purposes, sketches made by members of the A.I.F., and personal memoirs and souvenirs of historical interest was taken over by the Australian War Records Section.

When Treloar started the war records section no corps of artists had been appointed — Dyson was still the only official artist in the field. But the Commonwealth Government shortly afterwards approved the recruitment of a body of official war artists from among the Australian artists living in England — mostly in the Chelsea artists' colony — and by the time Treloar assumed the

extended duties of his section two more artists from outside the A.I.F. — Fred Leist and H. S. Power — had, on the application of the High Commissioner, been given temporary commissions as lieutenants and sent over to join Will Dyson, who had by then been serving for nine months.

Leist and Power were followed in December of 1917 by C. D. J. Bryant and the irrepressible bohemian George Lambert, who in January 1918 was sent to Palestine and given the rank of captain. In February that year J. P. Quinn went to France and was followed in May by John Longstaff, A. H. Fullwood and Arthur Streeton. These completed the list of those drawn from outside the A.I.F. and were thenceforth known as the Official Artists. With the exception of Lambert they were all given the rank of lieutenant. The Australian High Commissioner allowed each of them £2 (\$4) a day while actually at the front, excepting Captain Lambert who received an extra allowance while in Palestine. For some reason Lieutenant Dyson remained on his old allowance of £1 a day. The equipment and maintenance of the artists was the responsibility of the A.I.F. None of these artists came under the control of the Australian War Records Section, being the charge of the High Commissioner's Office. Their work, however, was eventually collected by the records section.

A stipulation in the appointment of these artists was that all the sketches they made for pictures at the front became the property of the Commonwealth Government. Each artist had to guarantee to turn in at least 25 sketches, except the portrait painters, who could make a smaller contribution. Some of the artists interpreted these provisions less generously than others. Some turned in the bare quota, while others provided many more. Dyson presented his work in its entirety to the Government after his 18 months service at the front, but did practically all his important work during his first six months in France.

When the artists returned to England, which they mostly did after a three months stint on the battlefields, their sketches were inspected by a committee consisting of Dr. Bean, an artist chosen by themselves and two representatives of the Commonwealth. The committee judged what form of large picture each artist might paint for the Government and the committee then commissioned each artist to paint one or several large pictures at prices arranged between the committee and the artists, subject to Government endorsement.

Towards the end of the war the Commonwealth Government agreed to Dr. Bean's earlier idea that a second body of artists should be recruited from the ranks of the A.I.F. and eight of them, to become known as the A.I.F. Artists, were appointed from September 1918 onwards. Those who already held commissions, retained them and those from the ranks—the majority—were made honorary lieutenants. Daryl Lindsay, who had done several sketches as Dyson's batman, after receiving his commission was attached to A.I.F. Headquarters in London to specialise in drawing records of important surgical cases in military hospitals. The other seven A.I.F. artists were, in the order of their appointments, J. F. Scott, Frank Crozier, G. C. Benson, L. McCubbin, Captain W. F. Longstaff, G. H. Bell and C. Web Gilbert, the sculptor, who was not appointed until 18 December 1918—after the Armistice.



TANKS AND INFANTRY, AITAPE, NEW GUINEA, MARCH 1945
by Geoff Mainwaring 18" x 15 3/4"



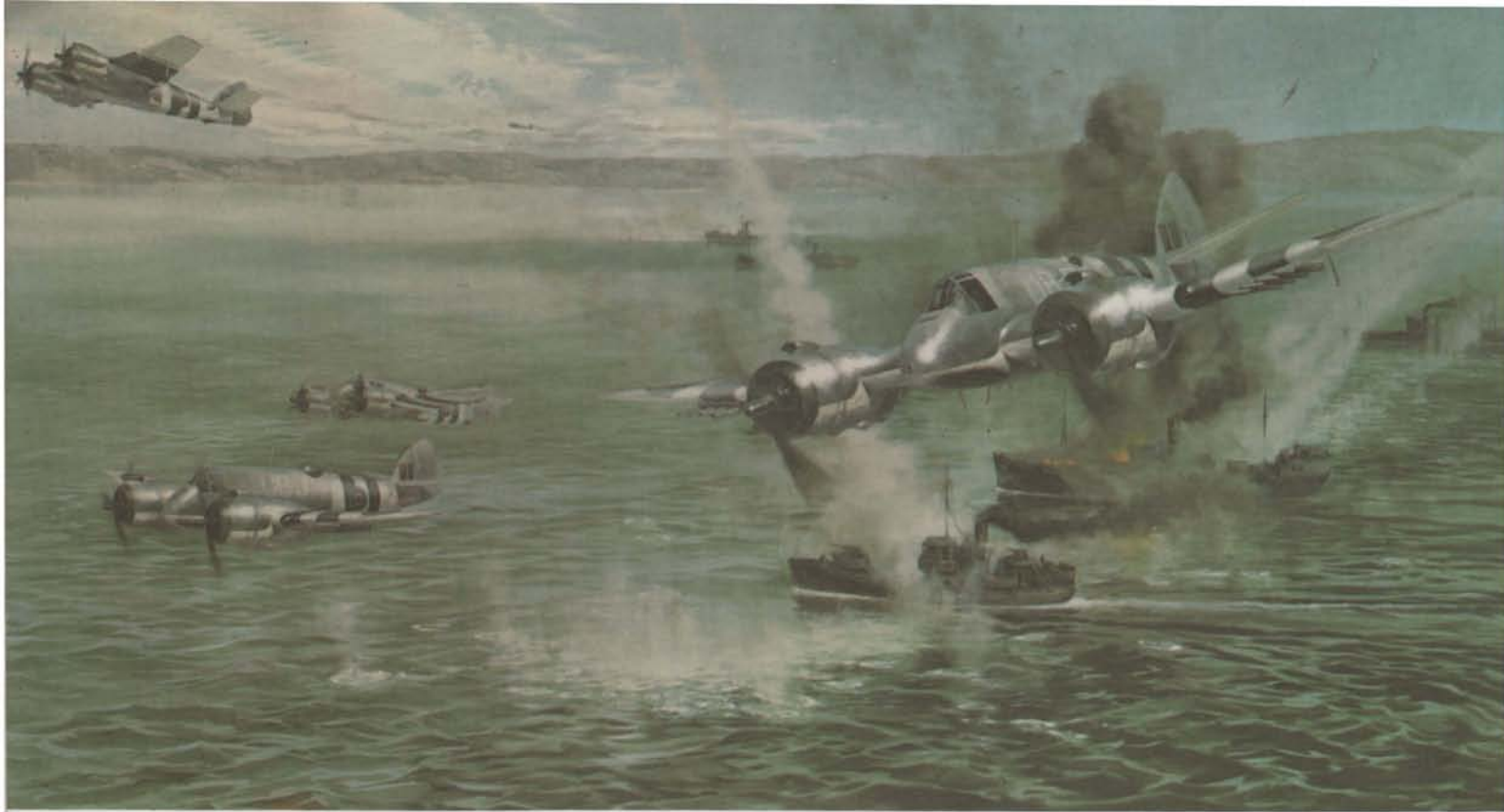
THE AUSTRALIAN CRUISER, H.M.A.S. PERTH by Dennis Adams 19½" x 24"

Again to satisfy military requirements all these officer-artists were classified as camouflage officers and one of them was attached to the headquarters of each A.I.F. division and of Corps "to advise on camouflage if necessary". This was a bit of camouflage in itself, and the artists were never called on for camouflage work. They came under the Australian War Records Section and all their work belonged to that section, but after the war they, too, received commissions to paint large works at agreed on fees. They were paid by the Army according to their rank. Crozier, who had already been working at Corps headquarters, but had a wealth of pictures of Anzac and the Somme to complete, was attached to the war records section for the remainder of the war to enable him to get on with his work.

Of course the work of the official and A.I.F. artists continued long after the war. In fact Wallace Anderson and W. Leslie Bowles, two leading sculptors, and Charles Wheeler, the well-known artist, all received their first commissions after the war. The 16 artists between them have 1,071 works in the War Memorial collection. Dyson contributed no less than 232 black-and-white drawings, G. H. Bell 138 works, L. McCubbin 111, and George Lambert 105. Web Gilbert is represented in the gallery by not only 12 major works in sculpture, but he modelled the figures for the Desert Patrol and Mont St. Quentin dioramas. McCubbin did the original background painting for most of the 1914-18 War dioramas.

There were no artists appointed to cover the navy or the Australian Flying Corps, which was then part of the A.I.F., but after the war Charles Bryant painted several naval subjects and other war artists painted portraits of Navy and Flying Corps personalities.

A week before the 1939-45 War began Lieut-Colonel Treloar, who was then Director of the Australian War Memorial, proposed in a letter to the Memorial's Board of Management that in the event of war the scope of the Memorial would have to be expanded to cover the new conflict. With his 1914-18 War experiences in mind he suggested that the War Memorial staff should without delay commence to function as a war records organisation. There was some opposition to the idea, and when the war did start the Government established a Department of Information under Sir Henry Gullett, who asked Treloar to go to the department as its permanent head. After some demur Treloar accepted and his idea had to wait on events.



NO. 455 SQUADRON BEAUFIGHTERS ATTACKING SHIPPING OFF NORWAY, 1944 by Ray Honisett 60" x 108"

In January 1940, when the first contingent of the second A.I.F. went overseas a plan for publicity and historical records services, to include the appointment of war artists, was approved by the Government. But it was still the period of the "phoney war" and the Minister of Information thought it better to wait for the war to liven up before appointing war artists. As it turned out a year passed before the first "official" war artists were appointed—Harold Herbert to the A.I.F. and Frank Norton to the Navy.

However, the General Officer Commanding the A.I.F. (Sir Thomas Blamey) had slightly anticipated the Department of Information in the appointment of war artists. Himself an art connoisseur, he was unhappy about the fact that there had been no Australian war artists in the Middle East when his troops had fought and won their first great battle at Bardia. A few days after the battle he sent a message from his headquarters in Gaza, Palestine, to have the 28-year-old South Australian artist, Ivor Hele, who was then serving as a private with the 2/48th Battalion, report to him. Hele arrived at Gaza on 9 January 1941 and Blamey told him he was appointed an official war artist. Within an hour Hele was promoted first a lieutenant, then a temporary captain, given a truck, a blank cheque to buy materials, and ordered back to the desert to paint. A portrait he later painted of Blamey now hangs in the Australian War Memorial, along with 406 of Hele's other works. So it was that Hele became the first war artist of the 1939-45 War. At the same time Blamey, who was a personal friend and admirer of the work of the distinguished water colourist Harold Herbert, got the War Cabinet's approval for the appointment of Herbert as a war artist in the Middle East. Herbert left Australia on 17 March 1941 and took up his duties with the rank of captain. Jack Hetherington in his biography of Blamey reports Herbert's first meeting with Blamey at Gaza: "Now then," said Herbert to his old friend, "let's get this straight at the start! Do I call you Sir, General or Tom?"

Blamey glared: "All you need to remember," he rasped, "is that I am the G.O.C., and you'll pay me the respect that my rank deserves."

Hetherington comments: "For once, if not for long, the irrepressible Herbert was deflated." He went to work and there are now 87 of his paintings in the Australian War Memorial.

On 18 January the same year the Commonwealth Art Advisory Board, then acting as advisers for the Department of Information in the selection of war artists, nominated Frank Norton as official war artist with the Royal Australian Navy and he took up his appointment on 6 March. He later also worked with the R.A.A.F. and completed 547 war pictures — all now in the Australian War Memorial. Herbert and Norton were then regarded as the first "official" artists, appointed on the 1914-18 War plan from civilian life. Hele, personally appointed by Blamey, and taken from his unit was at that time — again following the 1914-18 plan — designated an "A.I.F." artist. He was then more or less a "lone wolf"

The conditions laid down for "official" artists at that time provided appointments should be for six months in the field and the artists be paid a fee of £2/2/- (\$4-20) a day — an advance of two shillings (20 cents) on the 1914-18 War rate. The artists were required to submit the whole of their work to the Commonwealth which had the right to select up to 50 pictures for retention.

Any works in excess of these were to remain the property of the artists. The appointments of Herbert and Norton were the last under this arrangement.

As early as September 1940 the transfer of control of war artists — as well as the collection of war relics and documents — from the Department of Information to the Board of Management of the Australian War Memorial had been approved by Cabinet, but it was not until a year later that the first appointments of artists under the new arrangement were made. The task of selecting the artists was given to the Art Committee of the Board of Management of the Australian War Memorial, of which General Sir Harry Chauvel was chairman and Dr Bean and the artist Louis McCubbin were members.

When the Art Committee met on 13 September 1941 to carry out its new duties Herbert, who had completed his tour of service, and returned to Australia, was present at the invitation of the chairman to give his views and advice. The committee at this meeting arranged for the framing and exhibition of Herbert's pictures, approved the quality of Norton's pictures and decided to transfer Norton to the Middle East, and to appoint Murray Griffin as an official artist with the 8th Division in Malaya. (He later became a prisoner of the Japanese.) It was also decided to appoint William Dobell, William Dargie and Arthur Murch as official war artists "as opportunities permit". One artist was to be appointed for three months to work in central Australia, Darwin and Thursday Island. Artists were to be appointed for from one to two months to cover the war effort in Australia, and one artist was to depict the activities of Australian forces in the United Kingdom.

The committee agreed that the war artists it appointed would work under the conditions prepared by the Department of Information, which had applied to both Herbert and Norton. In the field they would be under the control of the Officer Commanding the Military History Section of the Army, Lieut-Colonel Treloar. War artists, like war correspondents, were graded as officers and wore uniform, but without any badges of rank. Late in 1943 Blamey agreed to the proposal that war artists be given commissions in the army. Some started as lieutenants, but senior artists were immediately advanced to the rank of temporary captain. Their rates of pay and other conditions of service were as for other members of the services. All their work thenceforth became the property of the Commonwealth. Two women artists were commissioned under this arrangement — Nora Heysen with the Army Nursing Service in New Guinea and Stella Bowen in the United Kingdom. Blamey also agreed about this time for a limited number of artists serving with the A.M.F. to be released from their military duties and attached to the Military History Section. These were officially designated "A.M.F. Artists". They continued to be paid the rates ruling for their military rank, and all their work belonged to the Commonwealth. Hele, on his return from the Middle East, lost his "lone wolf" status and joined the A.M.F. band.

The plan was to give all the artists as varied a view of the war as possible, and they were moved from one war theatre to another. Although commissioned in the Army several of them also served as artists with the Navy and the R.A.A.F. For instance, William Dargie, probably Australia's best known portrait painter and eight times winner of the Archibald Prize — two gained while serving as a war artist, and the remainder later — painted in New Guinea and then transferred to the R.A.A.F. in the Middle East. He also worked in India, Australia and Greece. The two Archibald Prize portraits he painted as a war artist — J. H. Gordon V.C., and Lieut-General Sir Edmund Herring — belonged to the Government, and are in the Australian War Memorial, but Dargie retained the prize money. He was the most prolific of the war artists, no less than 585 of his sketches and paintings being in the War Memorial. Dennis Adams' output of 428 war sketches and pictures was exceeded only by those of Dargie's and Norton's. Covering the Navy and the R.A.A.F. Adams depicted the fighting men in violent action and during their daily rounds. In Europe he flew on bomber raids to get his action pictures and he painted in New Guinea, Australia and after the war in Japan.



BALLET OF WIND AND RAIN, 1944
by Colin Colahan 20" x 24"

Three of the "A.M.F. Artists" were also prolific contributors to the Australian War Memorial's art collection—Geoffrey Mainwaring with 357 exhibits, Charles Bush with 320 and George Browning with 252. Mainwaring's work was done mainly in New Guinea. Bush painted in New Guinea and re-created many of the activities of the Timor guerillas. Browning painted scenes on the Kokoda Trail and at Tarakan in Borneo. Others among the leading war artists of the 1939-45 War were: Donald Friend, Roy Hodgkinson, Harold Abbott, Henry Hanke, R. Emerson Curtis, R. Malcolm Warner, Douglas Watson, Alan Moore, Colin Colahan, Julian Richard Ashton, John Goodchild, R. W. Rowed, Max Ragless, Sybil Craig, James Flett, Ernest Buckmaster and Sali Herman. After the war a number of artists, including Ray Honisett, were commissioned to paint several additional war scenes and portraits.

Among the sculptors were Lyndon Dadswell, who in 1929 at the age of 21 had sculpted 12 panels for Melbourne's Shrine of Remembrance, and who had been severely wounded when serving as a Corporal in the 2/3rd Battalion during the fighting for the heights around Damascus in the Syrian campaign, and Raymond Ewers, who served in New Guinea.

In 1952 Hele and Norton were appointed official artists for the Korean War, Norton as a naval artist and Hele to cover the activities of the Royal Australian Regiment, the R.A.A.F. and the general Korean scene. The Kapyong Diorama commemorating the gallant stand of the 3rd Battalion, R.A.R., against the invading Chinese and North Korean troops, was the work of Vernon Jones.

Bruce Fletcher and Ken McFadyen have been painting the battles, patrols and daily life of the diggers and the operations of the R.A.A.F. — including the helicopters — in the present fighting in Vietnam. As after the 1914-18 War all the war artists of the three later wars who were commissioned to paint large works received agreed on fees.

The story of Australia at war has been preserved in the Australian War Memorial collection of pictures that now totals more than 8,000.



TRANS-SHIPMENT, BOMBAY, INDIA, MARCH 1942
by Frank Norton 16¼" x 18"



THIRD YPRES, 31 JULY 1917: TAKING THE GUNS THROUGH by H. Septimus Power 48½" x 96½"



SOMME VALLEY AT CORBIE, 1918 by Arthur Streeton 60½" x 96"



KNOCKING OFF, BANKSTOWN AIRPORT, 1943 by William Dobell 15" x 19"



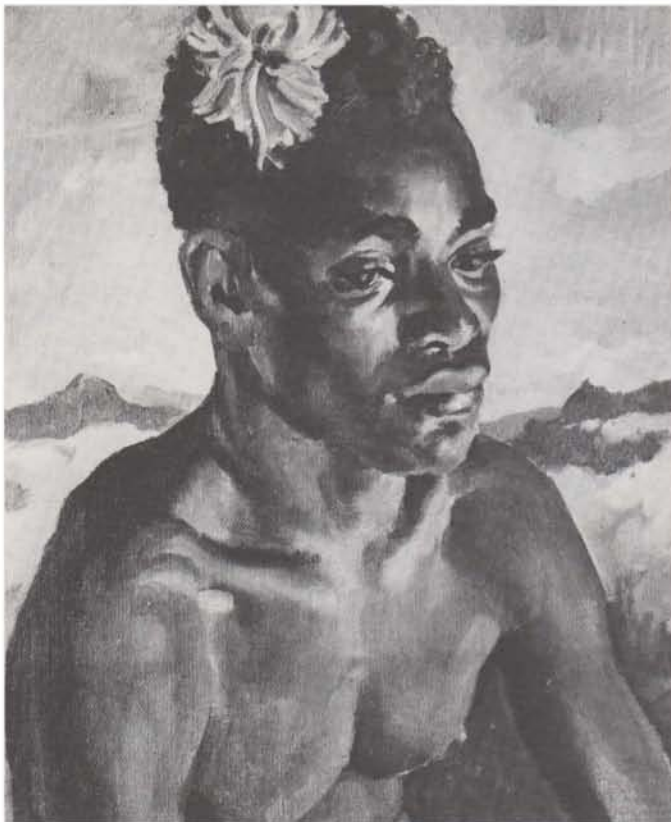
CAMP AT RABAU BY MOONLIGHT, 1945 by Sali Herman 18" x 24"



FIELD CASUALTY, BALIKPAPAN, BORNEO, 1945 by Donald Friend 30" x 40"



UBERI VILLAGE, KOKODA TRAIL, 1942 by George Browning 16" x 17¼"



NEW GUINEAN WITH FLOWER, 1943 by Geoff Mainwaring 17¾" x 15¼"



DISTRIBUTING GIFTS TO VILLAGERS AT BINH BA, SOUTH VIETNAM, 1967 by Bruce Fletcher 24" x 30"



STRETCHER BEARERS, NEW GUINEA, 1942 by William Dargie 56" x 94½"



INSERTION, VIETNAM, 1968 by Ken McFadyen 41" x 48½"



JACKSON'S SEVEN MILE DROME, PORT MORESBY, 1945 by Harold Freedman 29¾" x 50¼"



KITTYHAWKS AND MUSTANGS ATTACKING SHIPPING AT VENICE, ITALY, 1945 by Alan Moore 60¼" x 108¾"



TAKING OLD VICKERS POSITION, BOBDUBI RIDGE, NEW GUINEA, 28 JULY 1943 by Ivor Hele 60"x 108 1/2"

Old Vickers was a tenaciously-held Japanese position on Bobdubi Ridge which overlooked the main Salamaua-Komiatum-Mubo track during the 1943 Wau-Salamaua campaign. It was the key to Bobdubi Ridge as its capture would place the Australians in a position to prevent the Japanese either reinforcing or supplying their forward area round Mubo.

After two unsuccessful assaults it was attacked on 28 July 1943 by a company of the 58th/59th Battalion with the support of an intelligently planned artillery and mortar bombardment. So effective was the bombardment that the Japanese were just emerging from their dugouts amid lifting mortar smoke as the Australians reached the crest of the hill. Hurling grenades and firing their weapons, they pressed forward with such spirit that some of the defenders fled. Others remained and severe fighting continued for about an hour and a half before the last of the Japanese pulled out through the jungle, pursued by Australian bullets.



SERGEANT, ROYAL PAPUAN CONSTABULARY, 1944
by William Dargie 18" x 15½"



ARABS BY THE SEA, 1918 by George W. Lambert 14" x 18"



THE PYRAMIDS, EGYPT, AUGUST 1941 by Harold Herbert 15" x 19"



A HEAD STUDY by George W. Lambert. 1918



THE MENIN GATE AT MIDNIGHT, 24 JULY 1927 by Will Longstaff 53" x 105"



THE AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL CANBERRA A.C.T.